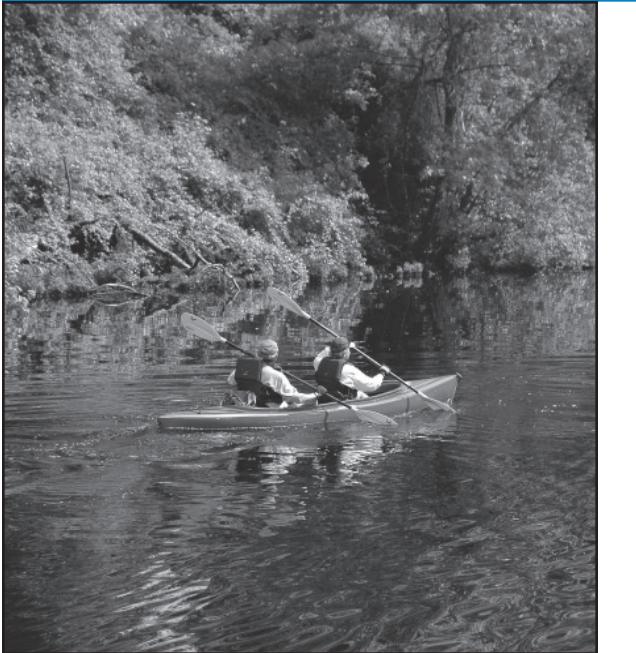




## Visitor Center

The Dismal Swamp State Park visitor center has something for everyone. As you cross the canal bridge, swing a left and enter the visitor center through the gazebo and boardwalk that overlook the Dismal Swamp Canal. Enter the lobby to see the "Web of Life" and "Denizens of the Dismal" displays along with a habitat map of the park. To the right, is the park office and Friends of Dismal Swamp State Park display and gift shop. To the left, is the entrance to the exhibit hall and auditorium. Straight ahead, you will find the restrooms and classroom.

## On the Water



As you enter the park, look for the canoe/kayak launch site to your left. There is space available to unload boats before parking in the regular parking spaces. Two RV/trailer spaces for larger vehicles are located on the east side of the parking area. The park gate closes at 6 p.m., so plan to be off the water and packed up by then.

Enter the park by crossing the Great Dismal Swamp Canal bridge. This bridge is the only access to the park and is operated at all times by a bridge tender. If the bridge is open to boats when you arrive, the bridge tender will close the bridge to allow you access. Boaters have the right of way so there may be a slight delay to allow them passage. The last time to cross the canal is 5:30 p.m.

Check out the beautiful boats that travel on the Dismal Swamp Canal, which is an alternate route for the Intra-Coastal Waterway, which is managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The best time to see the boats is in the spring and fall.

## Flora & Fauna

**Animal Life:** Only a few old logging roads and ditches break the vast forests of the park. The roadbeds serve as park trails and form habitat used by a wide variety of wildlife that live in the forests. Bobwhite and turkey are often seen feeding on seeds and insects here. Deer and marsh rabbits browse on the green herbs that thrive in the sunlight. Blackberry brambles and devil's-walking-stick are abundant along the roadsides. The fruits of these plants are favorite foods of the numerous black bears that live in the swamp. Persimmon, poke, blueberry, various oaks, black walnut and tall pawpaw also provide food for wildlife. Tracks of raccoons, opossums and gray fox can be seen along the roads. Bobcats roam these open areas in search of prey.

Along the forest edge supple-jack, grape and greenbrier create dense tangles of vines which provide perfect nesting conditions for neotropical songbirds such as the American redstart and the black-and-white warbler. Yellow-throated warblers and white-eyed vireos are often heard among the vines but can be difficult to see. Swainson's warblers are known to nest within the swamp, but they are rarely seen. Prothonotary warblers and wood ducks can be spotted along the ditches that parallel the roadbeds. Seven species of woodpeckers are present in the park. Red-shouldered hawks can often be seen flying through the forest. Occasionally barred owls can be heard calling from deep in the swamp.

Butterflies abound in the Dismal. Forty-three species have been identified in the park so far. Huge numbers of Palamedes and zebra swallowtails can be found "puddling" along the roads during certain times of the year. Tiger swallowtails, Atlantic holly azures and variegated fritillaries are also present in large numbers.



**Plant Life:** Populations of Atlantic white cedar can be found along the western edge of the park. The cedar trees grow in deep, peat soils which are common to the area. Hessel's hairstreak, a rare butterfly species dependent on the white cedar, has been seen here. Black-throated green warblers may be found nesting among these conifers.

The high pocosin along the northern boundary of the park is dominated by dense stands of inkberry, Gallberry, shining fetterbush and sweet pepperbush are also found here. High pocosin is a fire-dependent natural community. It is becoming rare in the Dismal today.

## Trails

Hop on your bike or lace up your shoes to enjoy the miles of trails that Dismal Swamp has to offer. The average, leisurely hiker can walk about one mile in 20 minutes. Keep this in mind and plan accordingly to avoid being caught in the park after closing. The last bridge access is at 5:30 p.m. Trails do not loop in the park. Distances given are one-way.



**Canal Road** (about 2 miles), this sandy surface is a great place to observe animal crossings. This trail parallels the historic canal where you may see beautiful boats floating alongside you.

**Cross Canal/Bull Boulevard Ditch** (2.25 miles) is a quiet grassy road where some cypress trees grow and bear sign, wood ducks and otters can be found.

**Corapeake Ditch** (4.8 miles) is located just south of the N.C./VA. border. At the junction of Corapeake and Laurel, hikers can observe the effects of wildfire that burned the pond pine habitat in 2003. Pocosin habitat is abundant here including bays and gallberries.

**Forest Line Ditch** (2.3 miles) is a gravel road where Atlantic white cedar trees dot the shoulder. Black bear and otter are commonly seen here on the park's western boundary.

**Kim Saunders Ditch** (5.4 miles), a grassy dirt road connecting to Canal Road, takes the hiker through the heart of the state park. Many black bears, turkey and butterflies are seen here. Birders will enjoy this spot for the many warblers they can observe.

**Swamp Boardwalk:** Enjoy a leisurely stroll along the accessible boardwalk as it takes you into the Dismal. Hear the sounds of frogs and birds without getting your feet wet.

**Supple-Jack Trail:** Beginning at the visitor center, this 0.5-mile trail winds through dense vegetation and connects to Canal Road. Keep your eyes peeled for the remains of illegal stills. Heavily wooded areas provided excellent cover that prevented detection of these illegal operations. When the stills were discovered, they were destroyed by law enforcement.

## History Highlights

Early European settlers encountered a very different Great Dismal Swamp from the one we see today. In the late 1600s, the Dismal was a vast wetland, covering over a million acres. It stretched from what is today the James River in Virginia, to the Albemarle Sound in North Carolina. For centuries American Indians had used the swamp as hunting and fishing grounds but found the area too wet to live in.

Some early explorers, such as William Byrd II, thought the swamp should be drained and converted to agricultural use. Early attempts at this proved unprofitable and efforts turned to harvesting the timber in the swamp. The Dismal Swamp Canal was completed in 1805, providing the means to move timber products out to market. By the 1880s most of the hardwood trees were logged out, but commercial logging continued in the swamp into the 1960s. The Nature Conservancy purchased land from the timber companies in 1972 and sold over 14,000 acres of that land to the State of North Carolina in 1974, creating Dismal Swamp State Park.

During the time of slavery the Great Dismal Swamp offered a refuge to runaway slaves. Some of these slaves lived in maroon colonies deep within the swamp. Others used the Dismal as a resting place on their journeys to freedom. In December of 2003, the National Park Service recognized the Great Dismal Swamp as a site of the National Underground Network to Freedom.



## Nature's Classroom

Dismal Swamp State Park holds the key to many of nature's best-kept secrets. Unlock the door to nature's classroom and watch the mysteries begin to unfold. Our rangers will guide you on exciting explorations where you'll uncover fascinating natural surroundings, and make great discoveries about the world in which we live. Bring our state's rich natural and cultural heritage alive. Embark on a learning adventure at the Dismal Swamp and discover the wonders of a nonriverine swamp forest.

The swamp boardwalk allows visitors to get a feel for the swamp without having to get off the beaten path. The platform allows a group to gather, look, listen and learn together.

Join a regularly scheduled interpretive program. Contact the park office to arrange a special program for your group or class.

## Rules & Regulations

Make your visit to Dismal Swamp State Park a safe and rewarding experience. Our regulations are posted throughout the park, for the protection of our park and our visitors. Please help preserve our natural resources.

- The removal of any plant, animal, rock or mineral is prohibited.
- All North Carolina state parks are wildlife preserves. Respect park wildlife. Do not disturb the animals.
- Do not litter. Place trash in provided containers.
- Do not throw aluminum cans in trash receptacles. State law requires that they be placed in the proper recycling container.
- Firearms and fireworks are prohibited.
- The possession or consumption of alcoholic beverages is prohibited.
- Pets must be on a leash no longer than six feet.

## For Your Safety

To prevent accidents, please remember these safety tips.

- Ticks are present during warm weather months at Dismal Swamp. Insect repellent may help to prevent a tick bite and the possibility of disease. Tuck trousers into long socks and tuck a long-sleeved shirt into pants. Wear light colors so that ticks may be easily spotted and removed. Check often for ticks.
- Do not feed or approach wildlife. North Carolina is experiencing a rise in rabies cases. Report sick or aggressive animals to rangers.
- Venomous snakes and poison ivy may be encountered along park trails. Exercise caution.
- Wear a life vest while canoeing or kayaking.
- Avoid over-exertion. Heat and wind may be tiring and may cause dehydration.

Contact park staff for other safety tips or an explanation of park rules.

The N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation is a division of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

William G. Ross Jr.  
Secretary  


Michael F. Easley  
Governor

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5M 7/08

# Welcome!

Take a journey into the Dismal Swamp, one of North America's great wetland forests. At one time, the Dismal Swamp covered nearly 1.28 million acres in North Carolina and Virginia. Today's swamp is smaller but its beauty and mystery live on.

The Dismal Swamp gives the park visitor a unique opportunity to see animals, such as black bears, butterflies and songbirds up close; the park visitor being the guest. The fragrant aromas from the many wildflowers fill the air. Find a quiet place and close your eyes to take in the myriad of sounds and smells that bring the swamp alive.

If you prefer more active participation, hike or bike along the old logging roads and trails. Take in the majestic beauty of the swampy forest. Smell the sensuous smell of the sweet pepperbush. Think back to a time long ago when American Indians, slaves and colonists walked on this ground. The Dismal Swamp State Park has a rich history that intertwines natural and cultural history. There's something for everyone, whether you're a history buff or an amateur naturalist.



## Information

To learn more about Dismal Swamp State Park, contact:

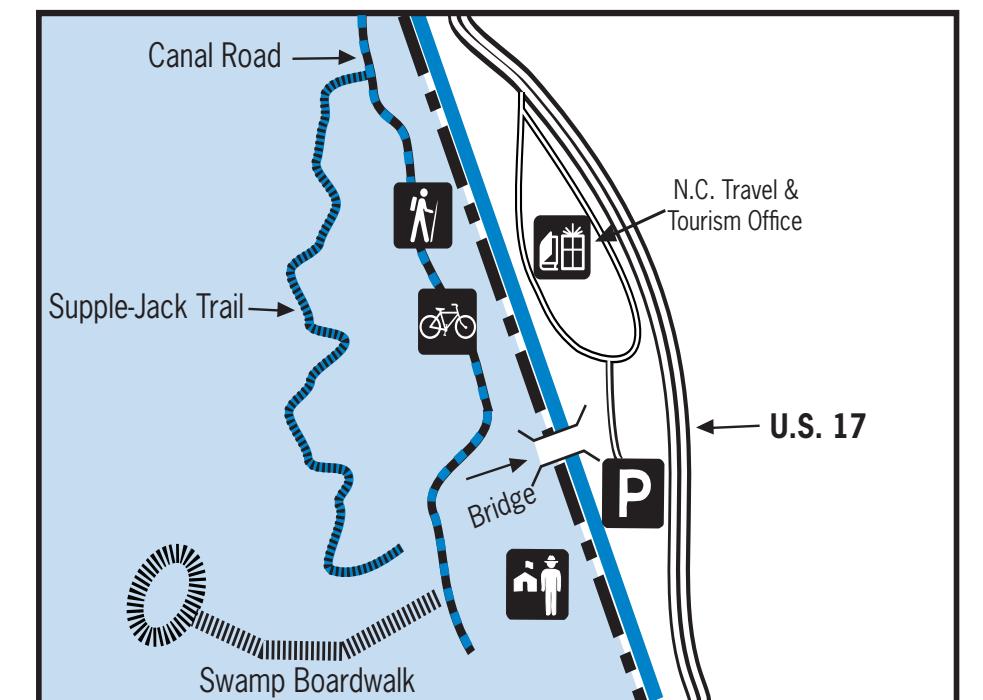
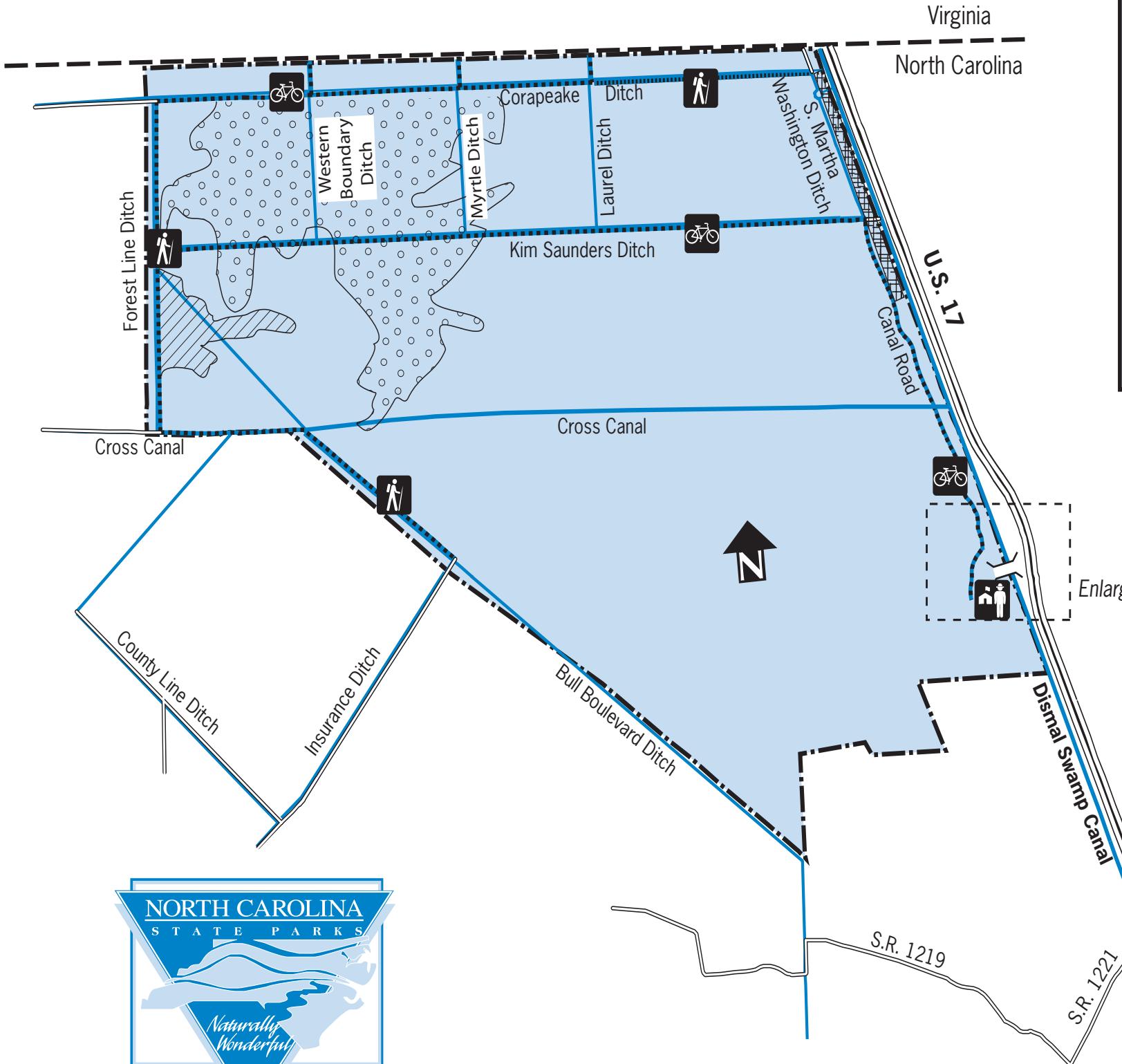
Dismal Swamp State Park  
2294 US 17 North  
South Mills, NC 27976  
(252) 771-6593  
denr.dpr.dismal.swamp@lists.ncmail.net  
[www.ncparks.gov](http://www.ncparks.gov)

Discover other North Carolina state parks and recreation areas, contact:

N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation  
Dept. of Environment and Natural Resources  
1615 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-1615  
(919) 733-4181

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# Dismal Swamp State Park



Dismal Swamp  
State Park

Dismal Swamp  
State Park



Dismal Swamp State Park is located in Camden County, near the Virginia border. The entrance to the park is located north of the town of South Mills, on U.S. 17 north.

## Legend

	Biking		Parking	
	Boardwalk		Pocosin R.N.H. Area*	
	Boundary Line		Roads	
	Bridge		State Line	
	Fern R.N.H. Area*		Dismal Swamp Canal Welcome Center (not affiliated with state parks)	
	Hiking		Waterways	
	Park Visitor Center		White Cedar R.N.H. Area*	

Hiking is permitted on all trails.

\*Registered Natural Heritage (R.N.H.)

## Park Hours

Year-round  
Closed Christmas Day

8 a.m. - 6 p.m.